

RAPE AND SEXUAL TORTURE IN SIERRA LEONE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, in all too many places and in all too many conflicts in recent years we have witnessed the use of rape and sexual torture as instruments of war. I am sad to say, some incidence of rape has always accompanied war and turmoil in human history, but the record of the past few years, with the use of organized, systematic campaigns of rape to terrorize civilian populations, suggests a new chapter in the barbarity of human history has been opened.

It was disturbing to learn there are serious and credible allegations that rebel forces used systematic rape as an instrument of terror in the eight-year civil war in Sierra Leone.

While statistics are not yet available, there is clear and credible evidence that thousands of girls and women, ranging from ages 5 to 75, were abducted during the civil war and gang raped. Many were used as sex slaves and forced labor. And it is possible many are still being held captive, subject to the depravations of their inhuman captors.

This horrific story was detailed in an article in yesterday's Washington Post. I ask unanimous consent to have the article, entitled "A War Against Women" from the April 11, 2000, Washington Post printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my remarks.

The civilized world must send a strong, unambiguous message that rape and sexual torture are not acceptable under any circumstances and will not be tolerated. The United States must be at the forefront of efforts to help the Government of Sierra Leone bring to justice those responsible for the systematic rape and sexual torture that took place during the civil war.

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 11, 2000]

A WAR AGAINST WOMEN—SIERRA LEONE REBELS PRACTICED SYSTEMATIC SEXUAL TERROR

(By Douglas Farah)

BLAMA CAMP, SIERRA LEONE—The women slip one at a time into a bamboo hut in this displaced persons camp, and most begin to cry quietly as they tell of being gang-raped and held as sex slaves by rebels who had sought to overthrow the government of Sierra Leone.

One 25-year-old woman said she had delivered a still-born baby the day before rebels of the Revolutionary United Front attacked her village in 1998. She was unable to flee with most of the other villagers, and five rebels took turns raping her, she said. When her husband tried to intervene, they killed him.

"I thought at first I was dealing with human beings, so I said I was sad and confused because I had just delivered a dead baby, I was bloody and weak," she said between sobs. "But they were not human beings. After they left I gave up, and I wanted to die. I had no reason to live anymore."

Human rights workers says the woman, who was rescued by a patrol of government troops, is one of thousands who were raped

by insurgent forces and other armed gangs during the nation's eight-year civil war. While statistics are not yet available, rights workers said the rebels' rape campaign was as widespread and systematic as similar assaults in the 1992-1995 Bosnian war but has received far less attention.

Unlike at least some of the perpetrators in Bosnia, those responsible here likely will never be tried because of a blanket amnesty that was part of the accord that ended the conflict last July. Even more worrisome, U.N. officials and government officials say, is that the rebels may still hold thousands of women in remote strongholds despite the fact that the peace accord required them to free all captive civilians.

"The [rebels] perpetrated systematic, organized and widespread sexual violence against girls and women," the New York-based group Human Rights Watch said in a recent report. "The rebels planned and launched operations in which they rounded up girls and women, brought them to rebel command centers and then subjected them to individual and gang rape. Young girls under 17, and particularly those deemed to be virgins were specifically targeted. While some were released or managed to escape, hundreds continue to be held in sexual slavery after being 'married' to rebel combatants."

Rose Luz, a physician with the International Rescue Committee, said that what is most shocking about the hundreds of rape cases she is documenting is the ages of the victims. Most were under 14 or over 45—many of whom were too slow or too infirm to flee. Luz said the youngest victim documented so far was 5; the oldest was 75.

"It is the ones who could not get away," Luz said. "They raped whomever they stumbled across."

With the consent of the women involved, Rescue Committee officials arranged for a reporter to be present during some interviews. It was agreed that no names would be used or photographs taken. The interviews were conducted at this camp—about 160 miles southeast of the capital, Freetown—which shelters 22,500 people who were driven from their homes in eastern Sierra Leone by insurgent forces.

If the rebels considered a woman attractive or physically fit enough to work, she would likely be taken along with them—not just to be a sex slave, but a domestic servant as well, Luz and other aid workers said. Often, they said, a captive woman would try to attach herself to one leader to avoid repeated gang rape. In a culture in which rape victims are often ostracized, such wholesale assaults were effective not only in spreading terror, but in breaking apart communities, social workers said.

The first victims began telling their stories to the Rescue Committee when the aid group started reproductive health classes here several months ago, said counselor Dolly Williams. Last month, in an effort to refer the women for urgently needed medical attention and help them cope with their shame and humiliation, the Rescue Committee began documenting their stories. As word of the program spread, hundreds of women have come forward, waiting their turn patiently while Williams and Luz record the accounts of other victims.

"Child and women abductees and victims of gender violence are far too numerous, and we do not yet even have a clear picture as to how many there really are," said U.S. Ambassador Joseph H. Melrose Jr., who is trying to arrange for U.S. funds to help the victims. "What is clear is that these victims and

their injuries, both physical and psychological, must not be ignored. If these injuries do not heal, they will have implications for future generations of Sierra Leoneans and the success of the peace process."

Williams said the rate of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea among the women is extremely high, a reflection of the 92 percent infection rate found among demobilized rebels. Neither the combatants nor the women are tested for AIDS or HIV infection because the cost is too great and there are no resources to treat anyone who tests positive.

The first woman to arrive at the palm-thatched interview room one day last week was a 60-year-old who came to tell how she was grabbed in her village by a group of raiders because she was unable to outrun them. When they could not find any other women, she said, they raped her.

"I begged them not to," she said. I told them I was old. I could be their grandmother," but they did not listen; they just laughed at me. Afterward they let me go because I was old and useless. Now I have pain when I urinate. I have sores; I can't sleep."

A 35-year-old woman said she had been abducted and raped by four rebels in 1997. When they had finished, she said, they took her to their commander, who decided to keep her. She finally escaped three years later, during a firefight between the rebel unit and government troops.

"I can't have a man again," she told the interviewer. "I have lost my life."

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I rise today in support of S. 2390 which Senator DEWINE introduced yesterday. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation. I know that, unlike additional infringements on the constitutional rights of law-abiding Americans, this bill will effectively reduce gun violence and save lives.

Like many of my colleagues, I am extremely concerned about gun violence. In my home state of Arkansas, there are several cities which have long been plagued by extraordinarily high levels of violence and murder, largely fueled by illegal guns, gangs, and drug trafficking. According to the 1998 Uniform Crime Reports, Little Rock, with a population of 176,377, North Little Rock with a population of 60,619, and Pine Bluff, with a population of 54,062, had 25, 8, and 17 murders respectively. The rate of murder per 100,000 inhabitants in North Little Rock-Little Rock was 10.3 and it was 33.8 in Pine Bluff and significantly exceeded the national rate of 6.3 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. Nonetheless, I have received literally thousands of letters from Arkansas asking me not to support additional gun control measures, but rather to simply enforce the laws already in effect.

My constituents are right. We do not need more gun laws. We just need to enforce those already on the books. The facts show that the Clinton Administration has not done this; from 1992 to 1998 prosecutions of defendants who use a firearm in connection with a